Teaching Philosophy

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*“Experience is the teacher of all things” - Julius Caesar*

There are many expectations that I had as a student and growing up. One of the being to: Respect others; the most important rule that I believe should apply to all human beings and should be the first thing that is taught to any child. It’s hard to succeed in life if you don’t respect others because then people are less likely to respect you in return. For me, it doesn’t matter if you are a kind person or a rude one; everyone deserves to be treated with respect. I would never want someone to treat me badly, so why should I treat anyone else with disrespect? I think respect is not only for the receiver, but for the giver as well; it makes you a better person if you have the skill to blindly respect everyone. Another expectation I remember from school was to have fun in whatever it was that we were doing. I’ve come to realize that having fun doesn’t always incorporate laugher and play, it can also be an intense game or time consuming project that everyone is involved in, but in the end, realizes that they had a good time working together and focusing on reaching a similar goal. With that comes my last expectation of having goals, aspirations and dreams. I have always been asked, since I began school, what my goals were, whether they were short or long term. Goals are important to have because they give students something to aspire to when they are working on schoolwork. From Kindergarten to Twelfth grade, it is so important to show students why they are doing the things they “need” to do and helping them to see how these needs are getting them closer to their goals. I think many years ago, education had a lot to do with how much money a person wanted to make in their future, for me and many more of the people of my generation, it’s more about happiness and what type of work could be enjoyable to do for the rest of our lives. This is important because when students are learning, they understand information best when they can apply it to their lives. Instead of trying to get through school to get to working, we should be showing students that school is a milestone that they can use to help them be the best and get the job that they most desire. School is not just a place they have to be, we as teachers should be making it a place they see the importance in and want to be.

I had so many great teachers when I was in school and I would like to credit all that they did to shape me into the person I am today, but I must say, my favorite teacher was definitely my fourth and fifth grade social studies teacher. She always came to class with a smile on her face and it radiated off of her that she loved to teach. Even though social studies wasn’t my favorite subject, that year it was my favorite class because she was my favorite teacher. I spent a lot of time with her during the school day just talking about any and everything. She was also my homeroom teacher so I saw her quite a bit throughout fourth and fifth grade. She just always cared so much about her students. I want to be the kind of teacher that students look back and remember the impact that I had on them like she had on me. I hope they remember the smile I often had and how much I cared about them, not only as my student, but also as a whole person.

I am outgoing, easy to talk to, and I love kids! I think that being outgoing is such a great characteristic that I have because it will help me when I’m teaching to be able to get my students excited about anything we are doing in the class. As I’ve mentioned, having fun is an expectation of mine and being outgoing will help me to find ways to get students having fun as much as possible. Being easy to talk to is also important when working with kids because I think they are more responsive to adults when they feel comfortable. I will be making it clear that my classroom is a safe place and giving students a voice to be able to express their thoughts and ideas. I know for me, I learn best when I feel like I can share out and be engaged in discussions with my peers and I think it is good for students to not only learn in that way, but also have a sense of community where they feel like they can talk to each other as well. The love of teaching has not always been something I knew I wanted to do. For a very long time I had no idea what my career path looked like, but since middle school I have been working in camps and it just took me until my Senior year in high school to figure out that I’m good at working with kids! I also am an athlete and I love being active and learning about my own personal health. Becoming a health teacher was so important for me because I realized that I want to share my love of exercise with students, but I also want to be able to help students be health throughout their lives; long term.

Studying education at the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) has taught me a lot about how and whom I will be teaching. I’ve described above the type of person I am and how that will help me to be a successful teacher, but I’ve also learned that not everyone is the same type of learner. For me, I learn best from hands-on activities and being active within my class; my students may not learn the same way as I do. They might be Naturalist or an Intrapersonal learner, which would mean I would need to tailor my instruction to all types of students with different learning styles. I’ve come to understand how important it is to get to know each and every one of my students so that I can best help them achieve their goals. Lesson planning becomes very important in making sure that I am reaching all of my students. An article, written by Pat Burke Guild on Diversity, talks about how students are not only individuals with different styles of learning, but they also have different backgrounds and cultures. These aspects impact how each student learns and how they will perform within the classroom. Part of a teacher’s main responsibility in the classroom is to not only try and teach to every type of learner, but to also engage them in a meaningful way. The goal is for all students to be successful learners and for each learner to have equal opportunities in the classroom. The teacher must be willing to teach to each individual learners and learning style to ensure that each student is reached. I think it is so easy to tell when a teacher is not hitting every student, but as I’ve learned at UMF, doing things like exit tickets or reflective essays can help a teacher to understand where the students are at and where they might need extra guidance. A teacher’s job is not to tell students what to learn and what to be engaged in, it is their job to provide an environment that they will be successful in and to give them the tools to develop knowledge over time.

A popular article titled, A Nation at Risk, is still a topic of discussion around education. For years, schoolteachers would tell us how competitive the "real world" was, but I never thought we would get to the point of calling our nation “at risk.” America has always had a prestigious standing among our competitors, but it seems that we are now in trouble as other nations start to progress and develop. We can see these red flags today in the news—there have been mass shootings in schools across the country, our police are being accused of being too violent, we have segregation still existing in many parts of the country, so on and so forth. We are fighting each other, instead of the competitors. We are entering an age where technology is everywhere and will be the main source of communication in the years to come. Knowledge is going to be the ultimate “weapon” to maintain America’s reputation. That being said, the education system is very different from what it was 25 years ago. A quote says, “As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves", which holds so much truth to it. “A Nation at Risk” helped motivate our educators and educational boards, as it was thought to put down public schools, it helped them progress instead. There was hope in our public schools. Something needs to change in our educational system so that we may positively progress not only for our nation, but also for our future generations to come. Nevertheless, there are some positives being made. Schools are shifting to a proficiency-based diploma, which I believe is such a great step forward. This will increase the amount of students who are understanding the information instead of just memorization and it will also increase the amount of teachers who are working to find ways to help individuals to understand their content instead of giving them a passing grade. Students and teachers will have to work together to show that they really can apply the information, not just regurgitate it on a one-time test.

I relate to the Pragmatism type of philosophy because I believe that people are shaped by their experiences and we best learn as people through our experiences. If we don't do things, than how will we ever know how it affects us? I think a lot of times students need to figure out issues on their own. It is not the role of the teacher to tell students how to learn and problem solve for them, but to give students the tools to be able to successfully figure problems out on their own. Pragmatism also includes an integrated style of curriculum, which I have done research on at UMF. This style uses an overall theme and includes some or all of the disciplines in teaching. Teachers work together on a plan and come up with a unit together. This has so many positive learning outcomes because the students can apply what they’ve learned from one class to the next, the teachers are working together which allows for a better sense of community, and it gives the student more application opportunities where they can clearly see how what they are learning is important.

A theory that I most relate with is humanism because it is all about student-centered education. We, as teachers, want students to be able to foster their own education as they grow older and develop as an individual. When they become college students, and maybe even teachers themselves, they will need to be self-managing, and we can do that by giving students voice and choice. In my own classroom, I plan to include my students as much as possible in planning my class and making class regulations. This theory also includes experiential learning. Students are more able to master concepts when there are real world applications and they can find similarities in their own lives. Class work is also based off of student interest, which is a great way to get students motivated in the classroom by allowing them to make choices on what they are doing.

A philosopher named Augustine has many aspects of his philosophy that I hope to incorporate in my own classroom. He believes in relating the content to what the student needs know. This includes taking into consideration what the students already have learned and know and building on that. I think many times teachers have an agenda and they deliver it with no prior knowledge of what the students know about it. I will always ask my students what they already know about topics discussed in class. Augustine also has a word he used that I think best describes my type of classroom, “solilloquia”, which is “two voices talking instead of one”. This word is exactly how I want my students to see my class, an environment where we are always working together to make it better. Augustine also discussed the environment and how it should be pleasant, compassionate, fair, and enthusiastic. These factors work together to make students motivated to learn.

Classroom organization is very important since it is one of the first things students will recognize when they enter my classroom. First, I think that having students in groups at all times is important because it fosters an environment that is cooperative and builds social skills. To do this, I would to have tables rather than desks so students must sit together, but if the school provides single desks, there are also ways to put the students desks in groups as well. They could be in a circle/square when working on projects, all the desks could be placed in pairs, the class could all just sit in one big circle, etc.

Lesson planning can be a great way to figure out, prior to the start of the class, where classroom organization can best help the class achieve their optimal learning potential. I think that students can learn so much from their peers and when I am lesson planning, I make sure to incorporate learning activities where my students can work together to problem solve and create products together. A teacher is meant to foster learning and give students the tools to be able to one day foster their own learning. It is important that lesson planning be the starting point for creating an organized classroom that results in the highest form of learning for students.

Another organization aspect that I believe is important is having the teacher’s desk somewhere off to the side and not right upfront. Student leadership and self-determination are two highly important aspects of my classroom, and to be able to make this happen, the students need to feel as though they are what is most important within the class. Along with that, I will always be putting students work around the classroom. I believe this helps them to see what they have done, but also to feel accomplished and proud of themselves.

The best way to motivate students is to make the class relevant to their own lives and to incorporate aspects that hold importance to them. When teaching a class, I believe that there are always opportunities to relate what students “need to know” to what students already know. Students spend a lot of time at school, but a good teacher spends time to find out what their students are doing outside of school. This will not only create a better relationship between teacher and student, but it also allows for the teacher to be able to incorporate what they are teaching in with the student’s lives. Motivation is often hard to accomplish, but I think that having positive relationships with as many students as I can is so important, and I also think that that will benefit me when it comes to motivating students in my class.

In my own experience, as a practicum teacher, I’ve noticed that many students in the school I was in did not enjoy taking health class. For me, as a student, the best classes are applicable to my own life and health is so easily that, but what is also important in a class is for it to be engaging and fun, which this health class did not have. I quickly realized that this is something I will always be trying to incorporate in each lesson, life applications and fun/engaging activities. I feel that often students know a lot about what it means to be healthy and if they were asked they could tell you what they need to do to be a healthier person, but when it comes to how they actually live daily, it does not reflect health at all. For many teachers, it is hard to get students to know the information, but I believe my biggest struggle as a health teacher is getting students to understand why being healthy is so important. I plan to use every opportunity to really show students the benefits of being healthy. I believe that it is important to teach them the long term affects of what can happen based on unhealthy actions, but it is more crucial for them to see the positives of a healthy lifestyle. Throughout my classes, students will be taking part in projects where they will actually create workout programs and meal plans for themselves so that they can see how easy it can be once they learn how. This is just an example, but there are so many ways to show students why their health is so important. Without a healthy body, they cannot do the things they want to do.

Assessment is so important for both the teacher and students. Together they will be able to see what the students know and what they need to approach more in depth in the future. The teacher can see specifics on what topics either the whole class did not understand and topics that maybe only a couple students need some extra time on.

There are two types of assessments that I plan to use, Formative and Summative. Formative assessments will be used to gauge students understanding within a unit. This will help the teacher to know how students are doing and who/what needs more time. Formative assessments are also not graded because they are only to check for student understanding. Summative assessments are done at the end of a unit like a big project. This is for students to show the teacher what they have taken from the unit. The teacher can also see from this final assessment if the class is ready to move onto the next unit or if more time is needed to be spent on specific areas.

My classroom will reflect a safe and accepting environment. Often when teaching health, there are sensitive topics that students are going to discuss. To start the class, students will create class rules. Within these rules, we will discuss the importance of respect and confidentiality. “Anything that is said in our class, stays in our class”. I hope students will take this seriously because I want everyone to feel safe and be able to speak their mind. I think it is so important to make sure students know that, as their teacher, I respect them as well. If I don’t have respect for my students than they will most likely not respect me either. If I don’t abide by the rules I hope for my students to follow than how can I expect them to follow them either? I will also have notebooks for each student to reflect in at least once a week about whatever is on their mind. I feel this is a way for students to be able to relax and be able to tell their story if they don’t feel comfortable sharing with others. After reading, *Teaching Hope*, I felt that many teachers were successful in creating a safe and comfortable environment when students were given notebooks to reflect in. Often the teachers were allowing students to share stories if they felt so inclined which I also hope to do in my classes as well. Students are always doing so much in the week and I think it is important for them to feel like they have some time to think on their own and not worry about class work. Many of them have a lot more stress in their lives than teachers know about and I hope that I can foster an environment where students can share their stressors and we as a class can help each other to overcome them.

Students will be aware of and focused on the standards and performance indicators that they must meet within the class. With schools moving towards proficiency-based education, I think it is important that students know exactly what it is that they must know and do to pass the class. Students will also be included in developing topics of study within the class to give them a voice in their learning. I think it’s important to not only show students what their learning goals are, but it’s also important to give them some choice as to what they want their goals to be as well.

Technology has not always been at the forefront of education. Now a majority of students have smart phones and most schools provide laptops for students to use for classes. There are so many different types of ways that technology can be used in the classroom to enhance students learning. I have taken an entire class on technology and finding ways to make it useful to students learning. We could just give them laptops and let them type papers and look up information online instead of in books, but that is not using the resource to its full potential.

There are levels of technology that we can define as the SAMR Model. The first level of SAMR is substitution, which is what the examples I used above are at for a level. There is then Augmentation, which is above substitution but still not exactly using technology at a level where students really need it. We want our technology to surpass these and be able to get up to Modification and Redefinition. These higher levels allow students to take technology resources and create whole new products that they would not have been able to make without the technology. If we aren’t getting our students to these higher levels then there is no point in using the technology.

I plan to incorporate technology into most of student’s activities because as they grow older, students need to be able to use more and more avenues in many lines of work. Showing them all different types of ways to make a presentation can help students to find the best resource that not only portrays what they are trying to say, but also includes everything they want and makes the presentation interesting.

As I said above in the classroom organization portion, I plan to have students working together as often as possible because I believe it is important for students to begin working with others and developing their social skills early on. Working in groups is not just something they will need for school; they will also need to have these skills when they are going into jobs. There will always be other people that they will need to discuss with and creating that type of environment in school will help them to be able to communicate with others more easily as they grow older. Working in groups also helps students to show their leadership skills and figure out how they work with others. Depending on the topic, some students will be more knowledgeable than others, which give them the opportunity to take more of a leadership role and be able to teach and help their fellow classmates.

Not only do I want my students to be able to work together, but I will want to work with my students as well. I plan to include their ideas and thoughts into every lesson and every aspect of my classroom. It is very important to me that my students have a voice in my classes. They need to feel like they have some say in their own education and what it is that they are learning. They should know that I am the teacher and I will have final say, but as rules and lessons are being developed, they will have a part in that process.

I want to be a teacher because I think there are never enough people to teach children how to be good human beings. Our job is not only to teach them to read and write, but it’s also just to show them why it is important to be a good person and how to be an important part of society. Most importantly, I just love kids and I want to spend every day showing students what it means to be healthy and why health is the best class ever! A superior teacher is someone who can teach students about the content that they need to know, but also be a role model to them. I want my students to love learning about health and to feel comfortable talking to me about their needs and desires. I want to incorporate my student’s dreams into my class and help them grow each day. I know that I am not the only teacher in my classes, my students will teach me probably just as much as I teach them and I cannot wait for that. There is always room for improvement and learning when you’re in a classroom. I hope to contribute a positive, relaxed and fun environment in the schools that I teach in in the future. My favorite part about Augustine’s philosophy is a quote, “education is for happiness”. If we aren’t teaching for happiness and our students aren’t learning for happiness then why do it? I believe happiness should be the overall goal for all people and I hope to foster that belief in my students.